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ABSTRACT

The five objectives of this paper are: (1) to make some observations about the California Community Colleges, (2) to state appropriate goals to be accomplished by a system of public education, (3) to relate these goals to alternative options in possible changes in governance of public education, (4) to relate these goals to possible changes in the California Constitution, and (5) to provide suggestions in respect to possible revisions of the California Constitution. (Author/DB)

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PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CALIFORNIA CONSTITUTION

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A decade has passed since the California Legislature charged the Liaison Committee of the State Board of Education and the Board of Regents of the University of California with the preparation of an over-all plan for public education. The work of the Liaison Committee and the Master Plan Survey Team culminated in the Master Plan for Higher Education in California and the Donahoe Higher Education Act, which have served as plans for California's system of public higher education.

The Donahoe Act has been amended several times, with a significant change in 1967 establishing the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. This plan, however, is no more than a method of action to meet the needs of today as well as the future. When there are questions regarding the attainment of desired goals, it is time for a review. Questions, as we know, have arisen. As a result, studies have been developed by the Coordinating Council for Higher Education and the Joint Legislative Committee on Higher Education.

But far more than a decade has passed since the California Constitution has been changed substantially in respect to public education. The Master Plan and the Donahoe Act did not in any way change the California Constitution in respect to public education; therefore, the possibilities of such changes would appear to be appropriately under consideration.

This paper has fine objectives: (1) to make some observations about the California Community Colleges, (2) to state appropriate goals to be accomplished by a system of public education, (3) to relate these goals to alternative options in possible changes in governance of public education, (4) to relate these goals

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to possible changes in the California Constitution, and (5) to provide suggestions in respect to possible revisions of the California Constitution.

1. The California Community Colleges

It is important at the outset to emphasize that Community Colleges are administered by persons in their local areas and in close and daily consultation with members of those communities. The California Community Colleges keep their doors open to give an opportunity virtually to any person, young or old, who can benefit from the instruction offered, despite his or her previous so-called failures, and irrespective of his or her economic and cultural status. The Community Colleges take pride in the fact that they devote their resources to counseling and guidance of students and teaching of students. One of the unique features of the Community Colleges in California is that academic and liberal arts programs are offered on the same campus with occupational and technical programs. Students who plan to transfer to four-year institutions and who plan to seek technical employment at the end of one or two years have a great deal to give each other. And the same feature applies to the faculty. Community Colleges are meeting their responsibilities to their local areas and to the state by providing both types of programs.

In 1968 the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges assumed from the State Board of Education all statewide Community College responsibilities and functions. But the record and the plans developed by the Board in that short time are substantial and significant. For example, the Board of Governors has taken steps to insure that Community Colleges will continue to be administered locally. The Board has advised the Legislature and the Governor that Community College districts should approve of most individual courses and instructional materials without

approval from Sacramento, determine the need for override tax levies and bond measures, manage and control district property, employ and assign all personnel, and establish regulations governing student conduct.

In addition, the Board of Governors also has a responsibility to the citizens of California in respect to functions appropriate at the state level. The Board, therefore, approves of plans for the formation of new districts and the reorganization of existing districts. The Board coordinates planning among the Community Colleges to insure prudent expenditure of public funds for possible joint use of facilities and programs, approves new Community College facilities requiring the use of state funds for capital outlay, and approves educational programs rather than individual courses.

Statewide functions also include representing Community Colleges at the state and federal levels, establishing a uniform system of budgeting and accounting for all Community Colleges, and establishing space and utilization standards for use of state funds for construction purposes.

The Board is also encouraging and assisting Community Colleges to provide a major leadership role for the education of disadvantaged students. Community Colleges are developing programs designed to satisfy the special needs of economically and culturally deprived students. These colleges are recruiting minority group administrators, counselors, instructors and students.

2. Appropriate Goals to be Accomplished by a System of Public Education

The first goal should be to provide maximum opportunity for California's citizens to obtain the fullest achievement of their educational objectives in accordance with their abilities. A publicly supported educational system should be based upon the premise that it is in the best interest of the public

for each student to have educational opportunities that will enable him to excel in his chosen field and enable him to make a meaningful contribution to society. Any barriers which make this achievement difficult for students should be removed. Access to public education must be provided for economically and culturally deprived students. Articulation among the public segments of education should be strengthened. Entrance and placement examinations should be under constant review to assure that access to public education is not impeded by differences in student backgrounds, in program requirements, and in methods of measuring academic accomplishment.

The second goal should be to achieve prudent and efficient expenditure of public funds in the maintenance of a high quality educational system. The purpose of prudent expenditure is to obtain maximum utilization of the state's limited resources. Maximum utilization may necessitate the use within each segment of public education of year-round operation, program budget techniques, cost effectiveness methods, and management information and reporting systems, which weigh the costs of any program against the benefits to be derived.

The third goal should be to provide a system of governance responsive to the needs of California's citizenry, students and personnel of the system. The management of California's system of public education must be adaptable to the changing needs of the state and desires of its citizenry. The system must also be adaptable to the educational needs of students as well as needs of faculty and administrators. The premise for effective governance should also be equity to the segments and individuals involved. Management must balance educational desires against public capacity. And, above all, the public must be involved and informed of the decision-making

process which governs the state's educational system. The system must accept and carry out responsibility for reporting its expenditures, articulating its needs, and justifying its programs.

3. Relationship of these Goals to Alternative Options in Possible Changes in Governance of Public Education

The options for change in governance of public education are generally variations of the following four themes:

a. Continuation of the existing three public segments with increased responsibilities for the Coordinating Council for Higher Education. This option would maintain the present structure of public higher education but would increase the functions of the Council. The Council would have a major role in the budgeting and allocation of public funds and in the approval of academic and physical planning.

b. Incorporation of present segments or elements of the segments. Several variations of this option have been developed as follows: The University of California and the California State University and Colleges could be combined under one governing board, or selected campuses of one segment could be shifted to another segment.

c. Establishment of a superboard. Under this alternative all of California's institutions of public higher education would be governed by one board This board would have the responsibility of establishing the overall higher educational policy of the state.

d. Establishment of regional governing boards. In this option the state would be divided into a number of regions. A governing board would be established in each region and be responsible for the operation of all public higher educational institutions in that area of the state.

Each of these options should be measured for possible changes in the governance of public higher education against the goals, enumerated earlier, of an effective public educational system.

Option number one could increase the budgetary and planning responsibilities of the Coordinating Council. Competition among the segments and campuses would not necessarily be eliminated by this or any other option. But the Council would increasingly become the arena for competition. At this time the Council has advisory functions related to fiscal affairs and educational programs. Changing the functions of the Council from advisory to statutory power could have the effect of creation of a superboard. Any specific changes would need careful examination.

Option number two would combine the campuses of the University of California and the California State University and Colleges under one governing board. This option would not necessarily eliminate competition between the two segments. Competition for state support could continue to exist among the campuses.

Option number three is the establishment of a superboard to govern all of public higher education. With only one board, difficulties in transferring among individual institutions could be reduced. Consistent state planning might also be achieved. But any of these possible advantages would have to be weighed against the difficulties of the management of a system composed of about 125 separate institutions. Problems involved with the management of such a system would be monumental.

Option number four is the regional approach to governance. Articulation among institutions within a region could be enhanced but would not necessarily be improved among the regions. The same competition that now exists among the segments for public support could continue to exist among

the regions. Regional planning would be stimulated but perhaps at the expense of statewide planning. Management of the regional systems might be sensitive to local needs and responsive to educational desires of the region. But, for other than Community Colleges, should all institutions of higher education, including universities, be regional, rather than statewide, in approach?

The advantages and disadvantages of each option are many. But are the problems of the present segmented system so overburdening that a complete restructuring of public education in California is absolutely mandatory?

4. Relationship of These Goals to Possible Changes in the California Constitution

The purpose of constitutional changes in respect to education should be to insure the maintenance of a viable system of public education, consistent with acceptable goals of such a system, and consistent with appropriate functions of the Legislature and the Governor to effect changes in the educational system within the constitutional framework.

Implementation of maximum opportunity for California's citizens to obtain the fullest achievement of their educational objectives in accordance with their abilities would appear to be a function of the Governor and the Legislature in appropriating funds for education in accordance with the ability of California's economy and in consideration of the fiscal needs of other services of government. Basic education and a foundation of educational opportunity in the public schools, including Community Colleges, could be assured, however, also by retaining that part of the Constitution which requires that the State School Fund receive first consideration in the expenditure of public funds. The goal of maximum opportunity could then be achieved by assuring all California's citizens of an education through the Community College level in order to insure the first step toward

further higher education or to insure that our citizens will have an opportunity to be trained as skilled technicians in order to secure employment. Such educational opportunities could also be guaranteed by including the four governing boards of education in the Constitution.

Prudent and efficient expenditure of public funds should be a responsibility of the Governor, the Legislature, and the governing boards through the development of year-round operation and program budgets and other techniques. Management and information reporting systems are subject to change and improvement, and it would appear wise to leave such functions in state government, to delegate to governing boards of public education as deemed appropriate by the Governor and the Legislature.

A system of governance responsive to the needs of California's citizenry can be assured by retaining and strengthening that part of the Constitution which assures local autonomy to local districts, including the Community Colleges. Proper safeguards may be insured by the delegation of statewide authority for minimum standards to the governing boards, after the establishment of all four governing boards of public education in the Constitution.

5. Suggestions in Respect to Possible Revisions of the California Constitution

The following three recommendations in respect to the Constitution are suggested as they relate to the foregoing goals of education.

First, all governing boards of public education should be specified in the Constitution: the State Board of Education, the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, the Trustees of the California State University and Colleges, and the Regents of the University of California. Such specificity would insure the stability and continuance

of a viable system of education, leaving to state government the capability of legislating in respect to these governing boards and delegating powers to these governing boards. If there is merit in including one segment of education in the Constitution, all segments should be included. If the term of office of the members of one governing board should be in the Constitution, identical terms of office for members of all four governing boards of public education should be included in the Constitution.

Second, the inclusion in the Constitution of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges should be specified in such a way as to provide that the present relationship of the Board of Governors with local Community College districts will be continued in order to insure appropriate local autonomy, thus providing for responsiveness to the local citizenry. Therefore, any concept in that part of the Constitution which provides for local control of school districts, including Community College districts, should be retained.

Third, the concept should be retained in that part of the Constitution which provides that the State School Fund, including funds for Community Colleges, should receive first consideration in the expenditure of public funds. Such provision will assure that basic public education and training for employment will be available for all of California's citizens.

All of us in public education must look into the future, as well as learn from the lessons of the past. Demands for change are coming, not only from students, but also from state officials. Changes could provide for adequate resources if each of the segments of public education will do what each can do best. In that way public education can demonstrate prudent expenditure of funds, consistent with maintenance and strengthening of quality of education.

One of the most important modifications to the governance of public education has already been made: establishment of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. This Board should be given ample opportunity to function in the future.

And the future can hold great promise if, although we recognize that not all citizens have identical abilities and skills, we do, nevertheless, provide, positively and aggressively, for equal opportunity of quality education. These changes are going to put stresses and strains upon us all. The Community Colleges have a valuable built-in system to involve the people of California in dealing with issues and resolving these issues within a framework of respect for each other's diversity, uniqueness, and individuality.

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